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Approved For Release 2004/07/08 : CIA-RDP82S00205R000200040029-8

6 December 1968

Project No. 51.5288

Recent Activities in North Vietnam
North of the 20th Parallel

Summary

Coastal movement of imported grain from Haiphong Port to the southern part of the country is being increased. SL-1 coastal vessels have been observed for the first time loading sacked grain at the Chamber of Commerce Wharves, which have previously been reserved for large foreign freighters. Convoys of up to 12 SL-1's have recently been noted leaving the Haiphong area. The Paul Doumer Bridge has only meter-gauge track rather than dual-gauge track as reported

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[redacted] Meter-gauge track is being laid on the eastern part of the uncompleted Kep-Hon Gai rail line, suggesting that the line will be used primarily for moving coal.

The recently harvested tenth month rice crop is estimated at 2.5 million tons of paddy, 500,000 tons below the pre-war level. Total production for 1968 is estimated at 3.8 million tons, a shortfall of 700,000 tons of paddy or 460,000 tons of polished rice. Record levels of food imports have been made during 1968 to offset this decrease and the increased domestic requirements resulting from population growth and war time needs. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] An aid delegation headed by Le Thanh Nghi signed agreements with the USSR on 25 November providing for economic and military aid, long-term economic credits, and the level of trade between North Vietnam and the USSR in 1969.

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Logistics

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1. [redacted] the Paul

Doumer Bridge has only meter-gauge railroad track across it. The

[redacted]

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conventional guard rail placed between the two tracks for protection

in case of derailment of a train. A guard rail is used on most

bridges and [redacted]

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2. North Vietnam has started laying meter-gauge track on the uncompleted Kep-Hon Gai rail line; a total of about 16 miles of track have recently been observed starting about three miles west of Hon Gai. Although about 90 percent of the roadbed for the 60-mile line has been completed, construction near Kep continues to lag because of a need to repair flood damage and to construct large bridges across several rivers in the area. The use of meter-gauge track on the line and the pattern of construction suggests that the line will be used primarily for the movement of coal. Most of the construction so far has been in the coal mining regions where meter-gauge equipment is used in transporting coal from the mines to the ports of Hon Gai and Cam Pha. The line will improve the movement of coal to Hon Gai and may eventually be extended to connect the two coal ports. When completed to Kep, it will also improve the distribution of coal within North Vietnam. Presently, coal for domestic consumption or export by rail to China must be transported from the Hon Gai/Cam Pha area by barge to Haiphong where it is transloaded to rail cars.

3. During November, increased priority apparently was placed on the coastal movement of imported grain from Haiphong Port to the southern part of the country. For the first time, SL-1 coastal vessels were observed loading sacked grain at the Chamber of Commerce Wharves, which previously had been reserved entirely for large foreign freighters. Trucks carrying sacked grain were backlogged on the wharves waiting to load the coasters. Convoys of up to 12 SL-1's were noted leaving the Haiphong area. SL-1's are capable of carrying 200 tons of cargo and have sometimes been observed loading at the fishing wharf.

4. North Vietnam may be holding in reserve SA-2 missile transporters as well as motor vehicles in dispersed storage areas around Dong Dang, near the Chinese border. [REDACTED] showed 31 missile transporters (tractors and trailers) in an open storage area near Highway Route 1B and an additional five transporters in a nearby area. This is the first time any sizeable number of missile transporters has been identified around Dong Dang. About 450 motor vehicles [REDACTED] most of these vehicles were in truck parks near Dong Dang. The number of motor vehicles in the area is no larger than usual.

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Agriculture

5. Harvesting of the tenth month rice crop has been completed, with paddy output estimated to be 2.5 million tons, 500,000 tons below

the pre-bombing level. This output, together with the fifth month crop, which is estimated to have been about 1.3 million tons, 200,000 tons below average, gives North Vietnam a total production of only 3.8 million tons for 1968. The decrease in 1968 is attributable to adverse weather -- especially damaging rainfall and flooding during August-September, delayed harvesting of the fifth month crop, delayed planting of the tenth month crop, and disruptions caused by the war. The 700,000-ton shortfall in paddy production (equivalent to about 460,000 tons of polished rice) and increased domestic requirements resulting from population growth and war time needs have necessitated a record high level of food imports.

Trade and Aid

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7. Ship congestion at Haiphong declined significantly in November, but still remained a problem. The average number per day of dry cargo ships in the port area fell from 33 for October to 28

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for November. However, the average layover time for dry cargo ships departing Haiphong was 30 days, well above normal.

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10. An aid delegation headed by Le Thanh Nghi signed new trade and aid agreements in Moscow on 25 November providing for economic and military grant aid, long-term economic credits, and the level of trade between North Vietnam and the USSR in 1969. These agreements reportedly provide for the delivery in 1969 of a "considerable" quantity of foodstuffs, mineral oil products, transport equipment,

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complete plants, ferrous and nonferrous metals, fertilizers, and munitions. Unlike the previous aid seeking trips, the delegation returned to Hanoi without visiting the other Communist countries, suggesting that the Soviet-North Vietnamese agreement signed in July 1968 provided only for supplemental aid for 1968.

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